
State Representative Bill Eickmeyer

35th District

Olympia address:

335 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7902

E-mail: eickmeyer_bi@leg.wa.gov

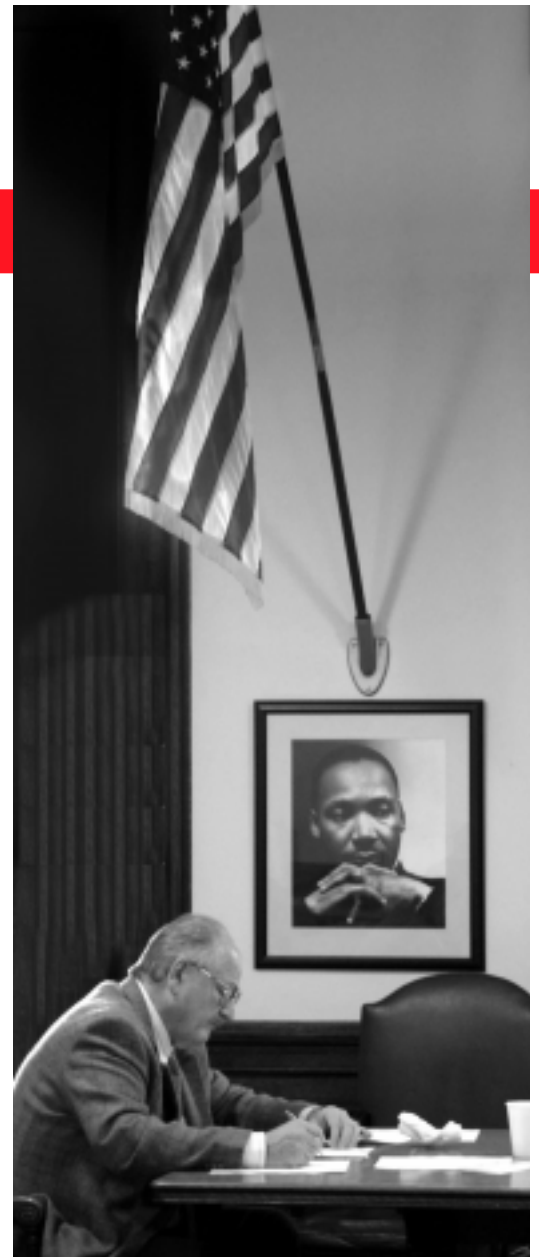
Web: http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d35_2.htm

Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

TDD (for hearing-impaired): 1-800-635-9993

Committee assignments:

Trade & Economic Development (Vice Chair)
Juvenile Justice
Natural Resources
Rules



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I want to begin this newsletter by going back to an excerpt from the one I sent you a few months ago:

"2002 promises to be the most extraordinary session in recent memory. We've got to completely rewrite the operating budget to correct for a deficit that's well over \$1 billion, and growing. We've got to step up and address the transportation crisis that is steadily choking western Washington. And we've got to do these things, and more, without bringing the roof down on our school kids, vulnerable seniors, or Mother Nature. Big jobs, but not impossible. I'm looking forward to doing what we need to do and ending this session on time for a change."

As you'll see in this brief report, that paragraph from last January pretty accurately sums up the 2002 session. We passed three budgets – operating, transportation and capital; we did it without hitting the average taxpayer in the wallet; we did our best to spare our kids, seniors and environment from draconian cuts in services; and we managed to adjourn right on schedule after 60 days, even though the work accomplished was more than what we might normally tackle in a 105-day session.

Now, does that mean this was the best session ever? No, not by a long shot; we're not home free. We know that, barring a miracle, next session we'll be facing additional budget deficits and more service cuts, with even more ingenuity required to get by on a finite amount of revenue. I welcome your ideas at this critical time in our history. Working together, I believe we'll make it.

Sincerely,

Bill Eickmeyer

Representative Bill Eickmeyer

A Report to the 35th District

Economic development

One of the bills I'm proudest of this year is HB 1395, which continues the rural economic development package I started working on three years ago. This bill amends the Growth Management Act to take the collar off the neck of small businesses in rural areas. Specifically, this bill will make it easier for "small-scale busi-



nesses" to set up shop on rural sites that have previously been occupied by another business, as long as the new business is compatible with adjacent land uses and consistent with

the rural character of the area. We're also making it easier for existing businesses to expand if their plans meet the above criteria, and providing local governments with more latitude in determining factors of planning.

The GMA is supposed to be an instrument of inclusion that supports the economic growth and prosperity of all the state of Washington. But the weakness of the GMA, all along, has been its inability to address the needs of rural areas. I'm happy that HB 1395 deals specifically with our needs here in rural Washington, and I think that more bills like this can help us close the divide between urban and rural areas.

Along those same lines, another bill I sponsored made it through the House this session and would have, I believe, been approved in the Senate as well if our budget had not been so tight this year. That bill, HB 2296, was designed to keep Kitsap County's economy from taking such a devastating hit when and if the Navy pulls large numbers of military and civilian jobs – and their accompanying \$363 million annual payroll – from the area. Because there was a modest price tag attached to the bill, it and many other good bills stalled in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. But it's the right thing to do, and I'll continue working the issue until we make it.

Transportation

I guess the biggest news to come out of Olympia this year is the fact that we finally broke the legislative deadlock that had held so many crucial issues hostage for the last three years. The strongest evidence of that is the transportation plan that will go before the public for an up-or-down vote in November. This \$7.6 billion proposal will, if it passes, go a long way toward clearing up some of the congestion that is choking the I-5 corridor, but it's a mistake to think that the crisis, and the proposed solution, somehow don't affect us here in the West Sound. Among other things we managed to get into the plan are:

- nearly \$700 million to improve ferry service, including new boats and improved terminals;
- \$6 million to replace the Purdy Creek bridge on 101; and
- \$1.25 million for a new Skobob Creek fish passage.



For the record, here are the broad elements of the transportation proposal you'll be asked to vote for or against next fall:

- A nine-cent gas-tax increase, with a nickel kicking in on January 1, 2003, and the other four cents added in a year later;
- A 30-percent increase in truck-weight fees; and
- A one-percent sales tax on new and used motor vehicles.

Every voter will have to decide for him- or herself whether they cast a yea or nay vote. I stood firm to send this plan to you for your final say. It's everyone's job now to become familiar with the details, weigh the pros and cons, and vote accordingly – and it's a vote that we'll all be living with for a long time. If I can be of assistance in helping you learn more about the referendum, please don't hesitate to contact me.



Representative Bill Eickmeyer

A Report to the 35th District

Tacoma Narrows bridge

After a dozen years of stops and starts, a new Tacoma Narrows bridge will finally be built, and by using public financing we'll save toll-payers hundreds of millions of dollars by the time the bonds are paid off and the tolls removed. That's good news for people who have to make that trek into Tacoma and back every day. It's good for the economy, both in Kitsap and Pierce counties. It's good for trucking, by cutting down transport costs. And it's good for safety as well.



An artists' rendering from the Department of Transportation web page showing the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge alongside the current bridge.

Education

In a year when every dime of government spending came under the microscope, we protected education as best we could. I'm particularly interested in making sure we don't starve our K-12 system or our community colleges. Again, as with so many other important areas, we did what we could to make sure our revenue downturn didn't affect them any more than necessary. That desire was a driving force in the decision to tap into the tobacco-settlement dollars. I hope we won't have to do that in the future, but the plain fact is, it kept us from even having to think about balancing the budget on the backs of our students.

Balancing the budget — without a general tax increase

Conventional wisdom said we wouldn't be able to balance the budget this year without massive tax hikes. But the problem with conventional wisdom is that it's conventional. And in this case, it was wrong, to boot. We managed to get out of Olympia on time and with a balanced budget — **without** raising your sales or property taxes. Instead, we made tough cuts and kept a lid on spending better than any other Legislature in 40 years.

Are there parts of the budget that I have problems with? You bet. Anytime we have to whittle away at good and effective programs that serve vulnerable people, my alarm goes off. Close to home, I was strongly opposed to terminating the funding for the Mission Creek Youth Forestry Camp. This is a cost-effective program with a long track record of helping at-risk kids and our communities. But these are extraordinary times, and I know that every county in the state had to see something go that they would have preferred to hang onto. In our case, we'll be mothballing the Mission Creek Camp, and my goal is to have this closure be a temporary one. For now, though, we need to take some satisfaction from the fact that we kept cuts in basic services to a minimum — and again, did so without the tax increases that so many pundits predicted.

On the horizon

Now that the session has ended, I will spend much of the legislative down-time in a study of Washington's non-profit organizations. As vice-chair of the House Trade & Economic Development Committee, I want to take a good, comprehensive look at these organizations that provide so many vital services, and that constitute such a large segment of our economy. The more we know about non-profits, the more effectively government will be able to complement them, and vice versa. This relationship will only grow more significant as government reaches the limits of the services, no matter how important, that it can provide without raising taxes.

(continued on back page)

Representative Bill Eickmeyer

A Report to the 35th District

(continued from page 3)

I'll also be active this summer and fall as a member of the Small Business Improvement Council, meeting with business owners in communities throughout the state. Our goal is to learn from these men and woman who drive the state's economic engine, just what it is they need most from the state in terms of policy. I believe that's the best way to get that information: talking to people in the areas where they live, rather than talking to lobbyists in Olympia. There's no substitute for personal contact.

Thanks for your help

On the subject of talking to real people about real problems, I want to thank the many people in the 35th district who have contacted me this session with questions, suggestions and even criticisms. I've asked in past newsletters that you feel free to get hold of me, and I'm glad you've taken that invitation seriously. Often, people outside of Olympia have a better perspective on some things than those of us who are in the middle of the arena day-in and day-out, and I know that many elected officials feel some of the best laws have been suggested by citizens from back home. I'm one of them. Thanks again, and I hope you'll stay in touch in the coming months.



PRESORTED
STANDARD
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

A Report to the
35th District

State Representative
Bill Eickmeyer
335 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper